



Wellingborough
Town Council

**FREEDOM
OF THE TOWN
POLICY**

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The position regarding the appointment of honorary freemen and honorary freewomen as a result of changes in local government legislation, linked to the potential desire of the Town Council to introduce such a scheme, acknowledging the departure of Borough Council of Wellingborough that formally had the powers of bestowing such awards.
- 1.2 Before the municipal reforms of 1835, there was a class of persons known as “freemen” in old corporate boroughs, enjoying special rights in the corporate property. The right to be admitted a freeman rested upon the custom of the borough, varied by the terms of its charter and, in certain cases, by local statutory provision. Generally the admission of a freeman, as distinct from the conferment of the honour of an honorary freedom, might be acquired, inter alia, by marriage, birth or employment to an existing freeman. The effect of successive reforms of local government law has been to continue the custom of maintaining a roll of freemen and regulating admission to it. Pursuant to section 248 of the Local Government Act 1972 Act (the 1972 Act) as amended by section 27 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act,) the admission of freemen (as opposed to admitting honorary freemen and honorary freewomen) of a pre-1974 municipal borough is approved by the chairman of the district council of the district in which the former borough lies.
- 1.3 After local government reorganisation in 1974, a number of local authorities were given the power to admit honorary aldermen and freemen pursuant to section 249 of the 1972 Act. However, that power was not extended to parish councils in England or community councils in Wales.
- 1.4 Prior to January 2010 only 10 local councils had the standing to confer the title of honorary freeman; seven in England (the councils of the cathedral cities of Chichester, Ely, Hereford, Lichfield, Ripon, Truro and Wells) and 3 in Wales (the councils of the cities of Bangor and St David’s and the Royal Town of Caernarfon).
- 1.5 The Town Council acknowledges that the honorary freeman appointed under the previous authority of the Borough of Wellingborough have been transferred to the new authority of North Northamptonshire Council.

2 DETAILED CONSIDERATION

- 21 On the 12th January 2010 the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 amended the provisions of the 1972 Act to enable all local councils to confer honorary titles. By virtue of section 249 (5)-(10) of the 1972 Act as amended, all local councils may exercise powers to confer the title of “honorary freeman” or “honorary freewoman,” to persons of distinction and those who in the council’s opinion have rendered eminent service to the council’s area.
- 22 Section 249(8) of the 1972 Act as amended provides that the admission of an honorary freeman or honorary freewoman must be by resolution made at a meeting of the full council specially convened for such purpose and passed by no less than two-thirds of the members of the council. Section 249(8) also requires “notice of the object of the meeting” to be given. This confirms the need for the agenda with the public notice and summons to members in respect of the council meeting to itemise a motion to confer the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman.
- 23 Section 249(9) of the 1972 Act as amended provides that a local council may spend a reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting a scroll containing an address to a person on whom it has conferred the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman.
- 24 Prior to the changes in the law, as set out above, some local councils, who want to honor local residents’ notable service to their town or community or who achieved national fame, conferred the titles “honorary citizen” or “honorary townsman” or “honorary burgess”. Therefore, the express powers given by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, section 29 to admit “honorary freemen” and “honorary freewomen” it will no longer be necessary or even possible for local councils to confer other titles.

25 CRITERIA

Should the council decide to agree to a policy of appointing honorary freemen and/or honorary freewomen then a set of criteria will be required.

For the purposes of this policy the word “Town” refers to the Parish of Wellingborough Town Council as being the defined area.

26 ELIGIBILITY

2.6.1 Individuals from all walks of life and all sections of the community who have made a difference to the 'Town' of Wellingborough are eligible to be nominated as honorary freemen/freewomen.

2.6.2 In keeping with the special nature of the award it shall be strictly limited to those who have made a very significant contribution to the community of Wellingborough and who have demonstrated "service above self".

The honour will be awarded for the individual's lifetime and not as a hereditary award. The maximum number of freemen or freewomen at any one time is restricted to six.

2.6.3 Made an exceptional and outstanding contribution to the local community in many ways over a substantial number of years, involving one or more of the following:

- A significant time in serving members of the community for improvement of their well-being
- The achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal contribution has been made
- Outstanding acts to promote the Town.

2.6.4 The nominee must have made an outstanding contribution to the Town such as the nominee's contribution can be seen to stand above the contributions made by most other people.

2.6.5 If the nomination is for that of a former Member of the Town Council, then to be eligible for consideration, they must have served at least 3 terms of office (12 years) these do not have to have been consecutive.

2.6.6 Nominations will not be accepted for current serving members of the Town Council related to their councillor role, a suitable qualifying period of one month must have elapsed after resignation from the Council before a nomination is accepted.

27 NOMINATION CRITERIA

The following should be taken into account when consideration is given to granting the honour of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman of the 'Town' of Wellingborough.

2.7.1 Preference should be given to a person who performs in a voluntary capacity, but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to a person whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected from their occupation.

2.7.2 The contribution to the welfare of the community must involve a significant

contribution of the person's time in serving members of the community for the improvement of their welfare or the promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal role and contribution is made, and the contribution must be so outstanding in that it can be seen to stand above the contributions of most other persons.

28 NOMINATION PROCEDURES

- 2.8.1 Nominations can be made by any person who has links with Wellingborough. Nominations must be submitted to the Town Clerk using the application form included with this policy.
- 2.8.2 The submission should outline the voluntary service provided by the individual to the community and any other examples of community spirit to justify the honour. On receipt of a nomination it should be circulated to all elected members for confidential consideration. On receipt of five signatures from members proposing the Freeman status the item will be included upon a council agenda scheduled between September and December in any calendar year.
- 2.8.3 The admission of an Honorary Freeman must be made by resolution at a meeting of the Full Council specially convened for such purpose and passed by no less than two-thirds of the members of the Town Council (section 249 (8) of the Act) That section also requires "notice of the object of the meeting" to be given. This confirms the need for the agenda with the public notice and summons to members in respect of the Town Council meeting to itemize a motion to confer the title of Honorary Freeman.
- 2.8.4 All nominations of honorary freeman are treated in the strictest of confidence. The nominee should not be informed that they have been nominated as it is not fair to raise expectations in case they are not met. It is imperative that submissions are not discussed with any other persons. Any disclosure may make the application invalid.

29 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- 2.9.1 An acknowledgement will be sent upon receipt of the nomination form. Correspondence will not be entered into on the merits of a particular nomination whilst it is under consideration.
- 2.9.2 The Council will be invited to discuss nominations received for the honorary freeman/freewoman. The Council may request further information from the proposer if required.

2.10 AWARD

- 2.10.1 Following a resolution by Full Council that an award is justified, the recipient will receive a letter from the Town Clerk notifying them of the nomination and inviting them to accept the honor in writing.

2.10.2 The awards will be presented at an individual ceremony and this will normally be the Annual Town Meeting of the Council between 1st March and 1st June.

The title of 'Honorary Freeman of the Town' will be granted by the Mayor who will present the recipient with an unframed scroll, following a speech about their achievements.

2.11 ENTITLEMENTS

2.10.3 Any person declared an honorary freeman or freewoman of the Town may designate him/herself "honorary freeman/freewoman of the Town of Wellingborough".

2.10.4 The recipient will be awarded a certificate to commemorate receiving the award.

2.10.5 Any honorary freeman or freewoman of the Town shall be:

- Invited to all subsequent civic events and functions;

2.12 WITHDRAWAL

Any person nominated who is deemed by the Council to have brought the office into disrepute may have the designation withdrawn. No less than two thirds of the Town Council, at a formal vote, must agree the withdrawal.

Please Proceed to Section B

SECTION B - This section must be completed with as much detail as possible

12 – Please explain (200 words) why you are making your nomination
(Please continue on separate piece of paper if required.) (You may submit up to four pieces of evidence to support your nomination)